

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00
DODE-00 H-01 NSC-05 IO-13 CU-04 DHA-02 ORM-02
TFCE-00 /087 W
-----082409 181340Z /41

R 161154Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5398
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 06791

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR MISSING LINES IN PARAS
4, 5, AND 6

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GE
SUBJECT: TREMORS AND RESIGNATION IN THE GDR CULTURAL
- SCENE

REF: BERLIN 6550

SUMMARY: WITH AN ATTEMPT BY SOME GDR WRITERS TO INITIATE
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A SECOND "BIERMANN" PETITION IN APRIL HAVING FAILED,
INCREASING NUMBERS OF GDR WRITERS AND ARTISTS ARE
EXPRESSING DISSATISFACTION WITH GDR CULTURAL POLICIES
EITHER IN THE FRG PRESS OR BY APPLYING TO EMIGRATE. A
MOOD OF UNREST AND RESIGNATION IS GROWING IN CERTAIN
CIRCLES OF THE GDR CULTURAL COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, MOST
WRITERS WE HAVE CONTACTED FEEL THE SED WILL SUCCEED IN

KEEPING THE SITUATION IN HAND BY ALLOWING PROMINENT BUT DISSATISFIED CULTURAL FIGURES TO EMIGRATE. END SUMMARY

1. A MOOD OF UNREST CONTINUES TO GROW IN CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF THE GDR CULTURAL COMMUNITY AS INCREASING NUMBERS OF PROMINENT ARTISTS APPLY TO LEAVE THE GDR OR VOICE THEIR CRITICISMS OF GDR CULTURAL POLICY IN FRG MEDIA. THE LATEST CASE INVOLVES HIGHLY RESPECTED LYRICIST SARAH KIRSCH, WHO SUBMITTED HER EMIGRATION APPLICATION ON JULY 25, HAD IT APPROVED BY THE SED A WEEK LATER, AND WILL DEPART THE GDR ON AUGUST 31 TO JOIN THE GROWING COMMUNITY OF GDR WRITERS AND ARTISTS IN WEST BERLIN. IN AN EQUALLY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT, WRITER GUENTER KUNERT HAS STRONGLY ATTACKED SED POLICY IN AN OPEN LETTER IN DIE ZEIT TO FELLOW WRITER JOACHIM SEYPPEL. KUNERT CHARGES THE SED WITH TREATING GDR WRITERS AS PATHOLOGICAL APPENDAGES WHO CAN BE PAINLESSLY AMPUTATED, AS WELL AS WITH REFUSING TO TOLERATE CRITICISM OR CONTRADICTION WITH THE GDR.

2. MEANWHILE, WRITER KLAUS SCHLESINGER HAS WRITTEN A LETTER TO HONECKER PROTESTING THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG WRITERS AND STUDENTS STILL UNDER ARREST IN JENA FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES AFTER THE BIERMANN EXPATRIATION. SCHLESINGER PLANS TO RELEASE THE LETTER TO THE FRG PRESS IF HE DOES NOT RECEIVE A RESPONSE, IN EFFECT REOPENING THE BIERMANN DEBATE MORE DIRECTLY THAN HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN DARED SINCE THE EXPATRIATION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE REGIME FACES A POTENTIAL LITERARY BOMBSHELL WITH THE PUBLICATION IN THE FRG OF A HIGHLY CRITICAL BOOK BY HANS-JOACHIM SCHAEDELICH TITLED "ATTEMPTED CLOSENESS" (VERSUCHTE NAEHE). RELEASED ON AUGUST 12, THE SCHAEDELICH BOOK PROMISES TO RIVAL RAINER KUNZE'S BEST SELLER "THE WONDERFUL YEARS" AS A WIDELY READ AND SCATHING ATTACK ON LIFE AND POLITICS IN THE GDR.

3. THE GDR FACES CRITICISM FROM ITS MORE ORTHODOX FOLLOWERS AS WELL. WRITING IN COMMEMORATION OF THE RECENTLY DECEASED ERNST BLOCK, GDR PHILOSOPHER WOLFGANG HARICH HAS ACCUSED BOTH THE SED AND GDR ARTISTS OF A "SHORT SIGHTED RESIGNATION" THAT THREATENS TO INFLICT SEVERE DAMAGE ON THE GDR CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL SCENE. FOR HARICH, THOSE ARTISTS WHO NOW APPLY TO LEAVE ARE GIVING UP TOO EASILY, WHILE THE SED SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATES THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THEIR DEPARTURE. AND IT APPEARS THAT THE GDR MAY CONTINUE TO LOSE ITS BEST ARTISTS AS LONG AS IT ALLOWS THEM TO GO. AMONG THOSE RUMORED TO BE CONTEMPLATING LEAVING ARE WRITERS GUENTER KUNERT, JUREK BECKER,

KLAUS SCHLESINGER, AND FILM DIRECTOR EGON GUENTER.
RUMORS IN THE FRG PRESS TO THE EFFECT THAT STEFAN
HEYM MAY LEAVE APPEAR UNFOUNDED, BASED ON A DISCUSSION
CHARGE HAD WITH HIM TEN DAYS AGO.

4. BASED ON RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH KIRSCH, KUNERT,
BECKER, SCHLESINGER, HARICH, SCHAEDLICH AND SEVERAL OTHER
GDR WRITERS, WE THINK THE SED IS FACING A SECOND AND
INCREASINGLY SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH MANY OF THE MOST
PROMINENT BIERMANN PETITION SIGNERS. MOST WRITERS FEEL
THE SED HAS GONE TOO FAR TO TURN BACK WITHOUT
LOSING FACE, AND THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO ALLOW
WELL-KNOWN ARTISTS TO LEAVE WHILE REFUSING THE APPLI-

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR MISSING LINES IN PARAS
4, 5 AND 6

CATIONS OF LESSER-KNOWN BIERMANN SUPPORTERS AND APPLYING

STERNER MEASURES AGAINST YOUNGER UNKNOWNNS SUCH AS THOSE
IN JENA. THE SED POLICY AFTER BIERMANN APPEARS TO
HAVE BEEN TO ASSURE THE PETITION SIGNERS THAT THEY WOULD
NOT BE DENOUNCED IN PUBLIC, BUT TO INSIST THAT THEY
(((WITHDRAW THEIR NAMES FROM THE PETITION OR FACE A)))
CURTAILMENT OF THEIR POSSIBILITY TO PUBLISH OR
PERFORM IN THE GDR. WHEN MOST OF THE SIGNERS REFUSED
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TO BUDGE, THE SED DUG IN AS WELL,
ISOLATING THEM INCREASINGLY BY LIMITING, BUT NOT
ELIMINATING, THEIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK AND
PREVENTING THEM FROM AIRING THEIR VIEWS IN SUCH ORGANI-
ZATIONS AS THE GDR WRITERS ASSOCIATION.

5. OVER THE PAST MONTHS, THIS APPROACH HAS LED TO
INCREASING RESIGNATION AMONG MANY GDR WRITERS, WHO
FEEL DEPRIVED OF THE MINIMAL OFFICIAL ACCEPTANCE NECESSARY
TO PRODUCE AND WHO APPEAR TO HAVE GIVEN UP ON THE
(((POSSIBILITY OF ANY CULTURAL LIBERALIZATION OF THE REGIME)))
AT A TIME WHEN GDR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES MAY BE INCREASING
MANY FEEL THAT THE POLITBURO SEES MORE PRESSING
PROBLEMS ON THE HORIZON AND WANTS QUIET AND OBEISANCE IN
THE ARTS EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF FORCING OUT THE BEST
WRITERS AND ARTISTS.

6. SARAH KIRSCH TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 11 THAT SHE AND
SEVERAL OTHER WRITERS HAD TRIED TO ORGANIZE A SECOND
BIERMANN PETITION IN EARLY APRIL (THIS IS THE FIRST
TIME WE HAVE HEARD OF SUCH A PETITION), TO PROTEST
JENA IMPRISONMENTS. (KIRSCH MAINTAINS THAT 30 ARE
NOW IN GDR PRISONS FOR BIERMANN-RELATED ACTIVITIES.)
THE PROJECT FALTERED, HOWEVER, WHEN CRUCIAL FIGURES
SUCH AS WRITERS CHRISTA WOLF AND STEFAN HERMLIN
REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE. KIRSCH BELIEVES THE FAILURE
OF THIS ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE HAS LED WRITERS TO ENGAGE
IN INDIVIDUAL PROTESTS, WITH BECKER, KUNERT, HEYM AND
POTENTIALLY SCHLESINGER TURNING TO FRG MEDIA, WHILE
OTHER EMIGRATE. SHE FEELS THAT THE VERY BENEFITS
ACCORDED TO GDR ARTISTS IN THE HONECKER ERA--PARTI-
CULARLY INCREASED CHANCES TO VISIT THE WEST--HAVE
ACTUALLY FOSTERED CRITICISM AND DISSATISFACTION WITH
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GDR POLICIES. SHE ARGUES THAT HER VISIT TO THE
NETHERLANDS A YEAR AGO, SCHLESINGER'S RECENT VISIT TO

PARIS, AND KUNERT'S VISITS TO THE US, GAVE EACH WRITER
A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE GDR WHICH, IN HER OWN CASE,
(((STRONGLY AFFECTED HER DECISION TO LEAVE.)))

7. THE SED MEANWHILE HAS BECOME MORE LENIENT IN ALLOWING
ARTISTS TO VISIT THE WEST, EVEN SINCE BIERMANN. IN AN
APPARENT ATTEMPT TO PACIFY THE MORE PROMINENT OF THEM,
IT HAS BEGUN ISSUING MULTIPLE EXIT VISAS TO THE
WEST VALID FOR UP TO SIX MONTHS, A PRACTICE REFERRED
TO JOKINGLY BY GDR ARTISTS AS "RESPITE FROM THE GDR."
THE ARTISTS ARE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH SED CONCESSIONS
ISOLATE THEM FROM THE GDR POPULATION. INDEED, THE SED
PLAYS UPON THE AVERAGE CITIZEN'S IMAGE OF GDR
ARTISTS AS A PRIVILEGED ELITE WHO CAN TRAVEL AND NOW
EVEN EMIGRATE FREELY TO THE WEST. THIS HAS ONLY ADDED
TO THE FEELING OF ISOLATION IN THE GDR CULTURAL COMMUNITY.

8. THE PREVAILING ATTITUDE NOW AMONG THE MORE
OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE FAILURE OF THE
SECOND "BIERMANN" PETITION IN APRIL. WE BELIEVE THE
SED WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP POTENTIAL OPPOSITION ATOMIZED
BY ALLOWING THE DISSATISFIED TO EMIGRATE. MANY
WRITERS WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH FEEL THE GDR IS HEADING
INTO A LONG PERIOD OF MORE STRONGLY ENFORCED CULTURAL
ORTHODOXY, AND THAT THE ATMOSPHERE THAT ALLOWED THOSE
NOW LEAVING TO CREATE AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED
GDR LITERATURE IN RECENT YEARS WILL INCREASINGLY
DISAPPEAR. A PART OF THIS RESIGNATION IS THE PRE-
VALENT FEELING THAT THE SED HAS THE CULTURAL SCENE
WELL UNDER CONTROL, THAT THE UBIQUITOUS GDR SECURITY
APPARATUS CAN COPE WITH ANY POTENTIAL DISSIDENCE, AND
THAT THERE IS NOTHING ON THE CULTURAL HORIZON THAT
COULD THREATEN THE REGIME'S STABILITY OR BRING
LIBERALIZATION. POLANSKY
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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